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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (11/17): URGENT CALLS FOR
"NATIONAL PALESTINIAN UNITY"

Main Stories:

The three papers lead with news of the killing of four Palestinians in a November 16 Israeli air strike on Gaza, with Al Ayyam adding that two homemade rockets were fired on Israel, injuring six Israelis. Front page reporting continues that Israeli Premier Olmert has ordered the Israeli military to draw up plans for an attack on Hamas in Gaza, with Al Hayat Al Jadida adding that the Israeli Defense Ministry has called for a resumption of targeted assassinations of Gaza Hamas leaders. In related reporting, all front pages carry statements by Palestinian Authority President Abbas calling on Israel to maintain the Gaza truce while headlines also highlight statements by Hamas denying media reports that the group has agreed to a halt of rocket attacks on Israel.

In photo coverage, Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with a photo of women mourning the death of a Palestinian killed in a November 16 Israeli air-strike on Gaza, while Al Ayyam's front page shows an Israeli tank near the Gaza border. Al Quds and Al Ayyam front page photos related to Gaza-Egypt smuggling tunnels, showing Palestinians handling gallons of smuggled fuel. The coverage is accompanied by stories about the suffering of Gaza civilians, noting the emergence of black markets, lengthy power outages and U.N. warnings that, "humanitarian assistance warehouses" are empty. Meanwhile, Israel announced that Gaza crossing points will remain closed on November 17, according to front pages.

Al Quds, citing a report by London's Sunday Times, front pages a photo of president-elect Obama next to news that he plans to pursue an ambitious peace plan in the Middle East by backing the Saudi peace initiative. According to one of Obama's senior advisors, the president-elect commented privately during a July visit to the Middle East, that it would be "crazy" for Israel to refuse a deal

that could, "give them peace with the Muslim world."

Israel's Jerusalem municipality officials have issued an ultimatum to the Al Kurd family of the East Jerusalem Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood to remove their protest tent, according to Al Quds' and Al Ayyam's front pages and Al Hayat Al Jadida's inside story. The Palestinian Al Kurd family erected a tent on their property after being evicted by Israeli police from their Jerusalem home, which was turned over to "Israeli settlers." Al Kurd family member Um Kamil, told press that she would remain on her land with her handicapped husband since they have "nowhere else to go," papers report.

Al Quds' front page reports that Egypt may opt for the launch of secret talks between Fatah and Hamas, in light of other policy failures. Citing DPA, the paper quotes "Palestinian official Ali Badwan noting that Egypt has failed to accomplish a prisoners exchange deal between Israel and Hamas and the launch of internal Palestinian talks in Cairo. In related news, Al Ayyam's front page reports that Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa met with Hamas Chief Khaled Misha'al at the Syrian Foreign Ministry in Damascus on November 16 to discuss Palestinian talks. The paper also reports that Fatah leader Nabil Sha'ath ruled out the possibility of Palestinian talks before the meeting of Arab foreign ministers on November 26.

In response to official Israeli denials, Israeli daily Haaretz confirmed on November 17, that it is in possession of a detailed document proving that Israeli Defense Minister Barak has approved the building of 400 new settlement units in the West Bank, according to Al Quds' front page. Al Quds' inside page runs related news from

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a report released by the Palestinian Applied Research Institute "Arij." The report contends that Israel has, "escalated violations against Palestinians," since the Annapolis conference by building 41,559 new settlement units and 12 new settlement outposts, demolishing 90 Palestinian houses, and uprooting 8,000 trees.

A Palestinian woman lost her baby when she was prevented from reaching a Palestinian hospital by Israeli soldiers at the Huwarra checkpoint near the West Bank city of Nablus, according to Al Quds' inside story. Reporting notes that the soldiers laughed as they watched the woman giving birth and highlights UN statistics that 52 Palestinian women have given birth at checkpoints; 29 infants have died during these births.

Al Ayyam's front page publishes a photo of President Bush waving to an audience at the Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy in Washington. The paper, citing DPA, said it was a farewell meeting for Bush who left the meeting with a "bye" that no one in the hall mistook for a, "see you."

Weekend stories

Sunday, November 16

All front pages reported that the Israeli military is examining the option of conducting a broad-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip. The dailies highlighted a statement by Israeli Defense Minister Barak commenting that, "the attack on Gaza would expose Israel to security risks. We will pay a high price for the release of [captured Israeli soldier] Shalit. Barak continued that a large-scale operation would not be launched now and that "provocation is not useful. I am a defense minister, not a minister of war." The papers also noted that an Israeli Ministry of Defense source explained that Israel has no intention of re-occupying the Gaza Strip and that any operation would be designed to deliver a strong blow to Hamas and end rocket attacks against Israeli towns and cities. In related reporting, the front pages quoted Israeli Foreign Minister Livni confirming that, "Israel will respond strongly to missile attacks against its citizens."

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad called for "quick intervention" by president-elect Obama to save the peace process, according to Al Ayyam's front page. Citing statements originally

published in the French daily, Le Figaro, the report quoted Fayyad asserting that there will be no solution without "strong" international intervention, spearheaded by the U.S., who would monitor compliance by Israel and the Palestinians to their obligations. In contrast, the dailies front paged comments by Israeli Foreign Minister Livni commenting that Israel does not need the help of a third party to bridge gaps between the two parties [final status solutions], however, Israel does need help with multi-lateral negotiations.

Palestinian Authority President Abbas will not give up an inch of Palestinian land, according to the front pages of Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida. Abbas also asserted that Israel must withdraw to the 1967 borders, "if it desires peace and security. Abbas' remarks also focused on the suffering of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and called upon the international community to intervene in lifting "the siege" that constitutes, "a war crime, against the women, children, youth, and elderly living there." Abbas made the remarks on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the PLO's, "declaration of independence."

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Saturday, November 15

Tensions are rising between Israel and Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip following the intensification of missile attacks against Israeli towns, all front pages noted. The two sides exchanged blame for igniting the situation that since November 4, has killed 12 Hamas activists and unleashed a barrage of 70 missiles on southern Israeli towns, including Grad missiles used for the first time by Palestinian factions. Meanwhile all front pages headlined E.U. calls on Israel to reopen Gaza crossing points.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida headlined remarks by Palestinian Authority (PA) Premier Fayyad that the PA is committed to a two-state solution but will refuse to make more concessions. In related reporting, the same papers front paged news that Israeli Premier Olmert told E.U. ambassadors that he intends to continue indirect talks with Syria at the beginning of next year before Israeli elections. He added that Israel and the Palestinians are closer now to a peace agreement than ever before and that what is needed is a show of leadership by the Palestinians.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds daily editorial is titled, "An escalation targeting everything national" (11/17): "[Israeli threats against Gaza] are collectively rejected and condemned by national Palestinian consensus... perhaps, the dangerous Israeli escalation can serve as impetus for the Palestinians, especially Fatah and Hamas, as well as, the Palestinian Authority] Presidency and Prime Minister Fayyad's Government and the fired government in Gaza, to rise above the wounds and reestablish national Palestinian unity. Israel has proven to all that it is targeting the whole of the Palestinian cause... thus, we say that it is time to take from Israel's hand, the [internal Palestinian] rift card and embark on a serious effort to unite Palestinians..."

2) Regular columnist Talal Okal opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "The Israeli escalation: Why and whither?" (11/17): "so, the truce [between Israel and Hamas] is about to collapse because of Israel. Israeli aggression may turn into a massive military operation... Once again, and certainly not for the last time, events highlight that ending internal Palestinian division is key to addressing the Palestinian crisis..."

Walles